

Practical Hints — August

The Holly Blue butterfly (*Celastrina argiolus* L.) is not easy to take in cabinet condition, but spring and summer broods can be bred without difficulty. For the spring brood, sheltered mature patches of ivy on walls or palings are the best situations in which to find the eggs, particularly in urban and suburban areas. The females of the summer brood deposit readily on quite small patches of ivy, and even where the buds are as low as from three to six feet from the ground. Search for the eggs soon after the first males are observed flying in the vicinity of ivy in early to mid August. They seem to locate the females with great ease, and these deposit even without sun if conditions are calm and the weather be warm. Often there are more than one or two eggs on a particular bud cluster. The desired shoots are easily severed, and for the first two weeks these should be placed in small jars of water and the larvae then transferred to plastic boxes for the last stages. The pupae should be kept cool and out of doors (protected) during the winter to avoid dehydration. I am told the larvae have cannibal inclinations, but this has not been my experience over a period of ten years with this species. I found that up to twenty last instar larvae, placed together in a plastic box measuring 6in. x 8in., came to no harm if provided with an adequate supply of ivy buds daily and the frass removed. Incidentally, it is better to collect eggs than larvae, since the latter are often heavily parasitised, mainly by the small hymenopterous wasp, *Listrodromus nycthemerus* Gravenhorst (R. M. CRASKE).

The larva of *Agrotis ripae* is as easy to find as the moth (see p. 109) if the sand is dry. Get as close to the high tide mark as the foodplant grows, kneel on the sand and lift a clump and scratch quickly with outstretched fingers through the top inch of sand and the larvae will be thrown out right and left. August is the best month and sea rocket the easiest to deal with. Saltwort and seaholly are very prickly propositions. I keep my larvae in deep old-fashioned biscuit tins. Fill the tin with pure sea sand to within three inches of the top. If the larvae are very small (and still bright green) I feed them on their foodplant for a few days. When bigger they get sliced carrot. The carrot wants changing every few days or it gets too hard. Put an old handkerchief over the top of the tin and then replace the lid. The handkerchief will absorb the condensation and the lid will keep the sand from drying out. Add no additional moisture. When full fed the larvae go down to the bottom of the tin and I leave them undisturbed and in the cold until the new year, and then they go into the linen cupboard and emerge in about five weeks. Before they are due to emerge, put a few twigs in the top of the tin and keep the handkerchief in position (which will be ruined by this time anyhow) (DEMUTH).

Imagines of *Chloroclysta citrata pythonissata* Mill. were not seen by day in Unst (Shetland), but could be found freely after dark in August, hanging on the heather, on the slopes above the lighthouse (A. RICHARDSON).

The Centre-barred Sallow (*Atethmia centrago* Hbn.) is difficult to obtain as perfect specimens at sugar or light, but they may be found, newly emerged, during the last two weeks of August and the first in September, by searching at the bases of ash trees after 4.00 p.m. Choose large trees growing in fields or hedgerows, preferably in the vicinity of woods containing a number of these trees, and not surrounded by much undergrowth. Do *not* look on the trunks of the trees, but on the ground, twigs and dead leaves not more than one foot from the base. By this time of day the moths will have dried their wings, and will be sitting on the ground in normal resting attitude, and can easily be boxed (POOLES).

The Square-spotted Clay (*Xestia rhomboidea* Esp.) occurs in a number of wooded localities in the South but is elusive. It will come to light and sugar but has been found in numbers feeding on the flowerheads of Burdock. The larvae may be forced through the same year, but the resulting moths are invariably undersized and it is far better to hibernate them. Plantain, dandelion and dock are acceptable foodplants. (CHATELAIN).

In Lincolnshire, as in other seaboard counties, the larva of *Eupithecia fraxinata* Crewe can be found with certainty and regularity only on Sea Buckthorn, but the moth turns up oddly in most inland places and its foodplants there are less easily discovered. From a female caught inland I reared caterpillars sleeved entirely on Chinese lilac and obtained good-sized pupae (HAGGETT).

In mid-late August, raised florets in the flowerheads of *Inula conyzae* indicate the presence beneath of pupae of the plume moth *Leioptilus carphodactyla* Hbn. The adults emerge in the late afternoon and hang on the flowerheads to dry their wings. Another plume *Platyptilia gonodactyla* D. & S. may be found freshly emerged just before dusk, sitting on the leaves of its foodplant, coltsfoot (WATKINSON).

Eucosma tripoliana Barrett can be netted freely at dusk on the Kentish saltings in the first fortnight of August, preferring the oozy parts where *Aster tripolium* luxuriates, especially where the roots of the plant are submerged at high tide. Second brood *Phalonidia vectisana* H. & W. and *P. affinitana* Douglas are common at the same time and in the same places (HUGGINS).

In places where *Coleophora spissicornis* Haworth is known to occur, collect flower-heads of white clover (*Trifolium repens*) into a cloth bag, close the bag tightly with string and hang it up. The larval cases are virtually impossible to detect among the dead florets, but untie the bag after a few days and if present, some of the larvae in their reddish-brown longitudinally ribbed cases (each formed from a dead floret) should be visible crawling up the inside of the bag ((CHALMERS-HUNT).